a drug formulation can be issued only by Central Government.

Distribution of medicines, Mobiles Medical facilities in affected areas

3023. SHRI K. V. THANGKABALU: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state the steps taken for distribution of medicines and provision of mobile medical services to patients to combat epidemics like gastro-enteritis, cholera, malaria and typhoid fever now prevailing in various parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): Public Health & Sanitation. Hospitals & dispensaries are State subjects and as such the primary responsibility of providing medical care to the affected population devolves on the State Governments. However, Central Government ensure adequate supply of medicines/vaccines and also arrange visits of medical experts to the areas affected by epidemics.

Indo-US sub-commission on science and technology

3024. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the project under the INDO-UNITED STATES sub-commission on Science and Technology, the steel absorber plates being provided are of mild steel and this variety of steel has gone out of production in the United States;

(b) whether it is a fact that U.S. agency has the need to import this type of steel from India by expending dollars;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the provision in the said project eased the problem of U.S. Agency in getting steel; and

(d) if so, what are the reasons for going in for such projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS AND SPACE (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Rare fungus discovered by Vector Control Research Centre

3025. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Vector Control Research Centre in Pondicherry have discovered a rare fungus of immense commercial value;

(b) whether it is a fact that this rare fungus is the source of a life-saving drug;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the entire world demand for cyclosporin which is produced from this fungus is now met by a multi-national company which is in possession of this fungus; and

(d) whether the Indian Council of Medical Research decided about handing it over to an Indian Company for commercial exploitation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Scientists at the ICMR's Vector Control Research Centre, Pondicherry have succeeded in isolating and identifying an active metabolite cyclosporin from a fungal isolate. This compound is used as an immune-suppressant to prevent rejection phenomenon in graft operations.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) As the studies are in progress to design appropriate media, production method and to perfect the extraction and purification techniques of this compound, the question of handing over its production to any company does not arise at present.